

A NEW READING SERIES FOR PUBLIC TELEVISION

# "The Letter People" On TV!



**ALPHA  
ONE**

an overview of its impact on the  
teaching of beginning reading

• **THE ALPHA ONE READING PROGRAM SERVES AS THE BASIS FOR A NEW CHILDREN'S TELEVISION READING SERIES FOR PUBLIC TELEVISION.**

The enchanting fantasy approach of ALPHA ONE'S cartoon Letter People creates a sensation when adapted for the television medium. Designed with the professional entertaining flavor that today's young sophisticates expect from television, *The Letter People* series offers the classroom teacher of beginning reading an exciting addition to her basic reading curriculum.

Based on the key decoding and teaching techniques of ALPHA ONE, now used in over 30,000 classrooms, *The Letter People* fills the educational slot between *Sesame Street* and *The Electric Company*. The sixty fifteen-minute *Letter People* programs concentrate on teaching phonics, word attack and how-to-read skills not presented by these other programs. *The Letter People* is compatible with any basal reading series and does not require any special materials. A Teacher's Guide for *The Letter People* will be distributed through Instructional Television stations. *The Letter People* is scheduled for release in the fall of 1974.

• **THE LETTER PEOPLE IS AIMED AT TEACHERS AS WELL AS AT CHILDREN.**

Leading educators agree that if public education is to maximize the potential of instructional television, teachers must become comfortable with television and learn how to effectively integrate televised materials with their basic curriculum.

The current classroom abuse or non-use of instructional television appears to stem from three factors: (1) the intrinsic passive nature of the medium, (2) lack of teacher familiarity with the proper use of ITV, and (3) lack of teacher involvement in program design. Ultimate ITV success depends on the extent to which ITV programs stimulate related classroom activities. Teacher ITV education and related classroom activities are two of the strong contributions of *The Letter People*.

• **THE COUNCIL OF GREAT CITY SCHOOLS "ADOPTS" THE LETTER PEOPLE.**

The Council of Great City Schools comprises the Superintendents of the 24 largest school systems in the country.

Because of a common need to improve beginning reading instruction and because the Council feels that the content and approach of the *Letter People* television series has universal applications for any K-3 situation, the Council has recently assumed the task of securing federal funding for the series. Several large school systems and state departments of education are involved with the *Letter People* project.

• **PURCHASE INFORMATION**

A number of both purchase and lease plans for this series are available. Please contact Station KETC, 6996 Millbrook Blvd., St. Louis, Mo. 63130, Tel. (314) 725-2460 or New Dimensions In Education, Inc., 160 Dupont Street, Plainview, New York 11803 Tel. (516) 822-6700.

- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE, IN ITS SEARCH FOR PROVEN COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN, CITES ALPHA ONE AS A MODEL SUCCESSFUL READING EXPERIENCE.



- HEW CONTRACTED WITH THE AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH IN PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA, TO UNDERTAKE A THREE YEAR STUDY OF READING PROGRAMS CURRENTLY IN USE.

Although several hundred reading programs were evaluated, only FIFTEEN PROGRAMS were finally selected on the merits of their statistically proven cognitive successes and their positive affective and social benefits. ALPHA ONE was the only commercially available program to be included among these fifteen programs.

- AT THE END OF FIRST GRADE THE MEAN GRADE-EQUIVALENT POSTTEST SCORE OF DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN USING ALPHA ONE WAS 2.68. THE SCORES WERE CONSIDERABLY HIGHER THAN WOULD BE EXPECTED FROM NON-DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN. GAINS INCREASED IN SECOND GRADE WITH NO FURTHER USE OF ALPHA ONE.

A posttest administered in January of second grade produced a mean-grade equivalent score of 4.14 on the Gray Oral Reading Test. Although the expected norm for non-disadvantaged children in January of second grade is 2.5 in grade-equivalent units, the RETESTED ALPHA ONE GROUP HAD A MEAN GRADE-EQUIVALENT ACHIEVEMENT OF 1.64 UNITS ABOVE THAT EXPECTED OF NON-DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS TESTED AT THE SAME TIME.

NOTE: A full reprint of this study may be obtained by requesting Stock Number 1780-0939 (20¢) from: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 or from: New Dimensions in Education, Inc., 160 Dupont Street, Plainview, New York 11803.

# **EPIE** Educational Product "in Brief" **REPORT**

## **Alpha One**

New Dimensions in Education  
Plainview, New York

IN JANUARY 1972, Educational Products Information Exchange Institute (EPIE) evaluated ALPHA ONE and also scrutinized the preceding HEW study.

- **EVALUATION OF HEW REPORT CONDUCTED BY THE AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH:**

"ONE OF THE BEST PIECES OF FIELD EVALUATION THAT EPIE HAS FOUND."

"Although the research evidenced some deficiencies, it was one of the best pieces of field evaluation that EPIE has found and prompts confidence in the producer's claim for the materials. Based on a nationwide investigation of programs using a rigorous criteria for selection, this study selected ALPHA ONE as one of the ten best compensatory education programs."

- **"OVERALL, THIS IS AN IMPRESSIVE READING PACKAGE."**

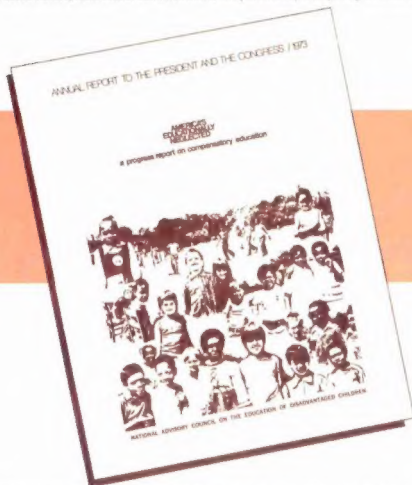
Reprints of the complete article may be obtained by writing to:  
New Dimensions In Education, Inc.  
160 Dupont Street  
Plainview, New York 11803

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INFORMATION EXCHANGE

**REQUEST "EPIE REPORT."**

- THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE EDUCATION OF DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN IS A FIFTEEN MEMBER PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION.
- ALPHA ONE WAS THE ONLY COMMERCIALLY AVAILABLE READING PROGRAM INCLUDED IN THE COUNCIL'S 1973 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT AND THE CONGRESS. IN A PRESS RELEASE COMMENTING ON THE 1973 ANNUAL REPORT, THE COUNCIL REPORTED THAT:

"the NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL on the Education of Disadvantaged Children has chosen the commercial reading program, ALPHA ONE, published by New Dimensions in Education, Inc., out of over 600 such programs nominated for outstanding performance by the U.S. Office of Education officials, state Title I coordinators, local school administrators, and parents of participating children across the country."



- "THE 216 PROGRAMS CHOSEN BY THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE EDUCATION OF DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN WERE SELECTED ON THE BASES OF THEIR OBJECTIVITY AND SIGNIFICANT FINAL RESULTS."
- "IN ITS REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT AND THE CONGRESS, THE COUNCIL CITED ALPHA ONE AS BEING MOST EFFECTIVE IN BRINGING THE FUN BACK INTO READING."

Although Right to Read does not endorse or recommend any specific reading materials or programs, the Right to Read Office seems to be offering the schools some help in establishing critical guidelines for selecting reading materials. ACCORDING TO THESE GUIDELINES, ALPHA ONE SEEMS TO SCORE EXTREMELY WELL.

For example, in Appendix IV of the NEEDS ASSESSMENT PACKAGE published by Right to Read, the essential points stressed are these:

- according to The Information Base for Reading (Corder, ETS, 1971), over 10,000 commercial reading materials are available to the schools,
- according to Kenneth P. Komaski, President of Educational Products Information Exchange Institute (EPIE), less than ten percent of the materials on the market were ever field tested,
- an even smaller amount (about one percent) has been subjected to learner verification tests.

But...

- a study presently underway, conducted by the American Institutes for Research, will result in a listing of many of these educational products and an indication of the extent to which they have been validated.

- THIS AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH STUDY REFERRED TO ABOVE IS THE SAME A.I.R. STUDY DISCUSSED EARLIER IN WHICH ALPHA ONE WAS THE ONLY COMMERCIALY AVAILABLE PROGRAM CHOSEN FROM THE SEVERAL HUNDRED PROGRAMS EVALUATED.

The remainder of Appendix IV is a list of materials preceded by the following explanatory paragraph:

"The materials listed below have been selected because they are widely used, characteristic of the category into which they fit, and are dealt with specifically by Corder, Chall (*Learning to Read*) or Aukerman (*Approaches to Beginning Reading*). Inclusion can in no way be interpreted as endorsement of the product nor as an indication that the product has been verified as effective in use."

These categories of materials include *Meaning Emphasis* (four basal readers are listed), *Linguistics*, (eleven programs are listed) and, by far, the largest category, *Code Emphasis* (where twenty-one programs are listed, including ALPHA ONE, and basal readers like Macmillan, Lippincott Basic Reading, and Economy).

- **THUS, ALPHA ONE IS RECOGNIZED BY READING EVALUATORS AS BEING WIDELY USED AND REPRESENTATIVE OF CODE-BREAKING READING PROGRAMS.**

the  
right  
to read



**NEEDS ASSESSMENT/SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMS**

**• A PERFORMANCE CONTRACT EVALUATION:  
EXCERPTS FROM FINAL REPORT, PROJECT  
GRIP (GUARANTEED READING IMPROVE-  
MENT BY PERFORMANCE CONTRACT).**

Under a performance contract with Newman Visual Education and the Sault Ste. Marie (Michigan) Area Public Schools, the findings indicated the following:

THE AVERAGE GAIN IN TESTED ACHIEVEMENT EXPRESSED IN GRADE EQUIVALENT READING SUBSCORES WAS 1.6 MONTHS FOR EACH MONTH IN THE PROGRAM FOR FIRST GRADERS.

The project was evaluated by Person-O-Metrics, Inc., and audited by Education Turnkey of Washington, D.C.

673 children participated in this program for September 1972—June 1973.

**• EVALUATOR'S RECOMMENDATION:**

"ALPHA ONE WITH ITS ENTERTAINING PERSONIFICATION OF LETTERS AND LETTER SOUNDS HAS PROVEN ITSELF AS AN EFFECTIVE AND ACCEPTABLE SYSTEM FOR THE STUDENT ACQUISITION AND RETENTION OF GRAPHOPHONIC WORD-ATTACK SKILLS IN READING, AND CAN BE ENDORSED AS A VALID DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR BEGINNING READING."





## Philosophy

It does little good to teach a child reading if in the process the child learns to hate reading.

As educators first, and publishers second, we at New Dimensions in Education are aware that there is no panacea, no *one* way to teach reading. We are also aware that there are myriad problems in the teaching of reading, as witnessed by the millions of children in need of remediation.

Although statistics force us to accept the existence of these problems, we are unwilling to accept as inevitable the fact that at least 25% of school children read at least two years below grade level, and that at least 25% drop out because of failure and boredom before completing high school. Children who can learn to talk, to play complicated games, and to repair automobiles are surely able to learn to read, and to *want* to read.

Historically, public reading instruction seems to have placed more emphasis on remediation — on efforts to salvage personalities deflated by failure—than on trying to prevent failure initially. Remedial instruction *per se* addresses only symptoms of the problem and not its causes.

Without intending to oversimplify, we are convinced that much frustration results not from attempts to teach basic reading skills in the early years, but from trying to teach these skills with methods totally inappropriate for little children. Those who profess belief in laudable teaching ideals like “relevance” and “involvement” too often forget that the child of six or seven probably still believes in the Tooth Fairy and Santa Claus. He is dependent on concrete sensory experiences and the literal con-

cepts of his imagination in acquiring most of his knowledge. Yet the monotonous methodology of traditional basal readers continues to rely on time-worn, time-failed abstractions. The dull rules and patterns—boring to an adult and lethal to the child—fail to respect the child's natural mode of learning.

The success of ALPHA ONE in over 22,000 classrooms during the past four years convinces us that today's teachers are desperately searching for new ways to make the classroom more meaningful for children. The old concept of a six or eight year basal series cannot be defended with the argument “it offers continuity.” The continuity is often a superficial one created by pictures and a cast of characters rather than by the child's progressive development in the solid learning of basic skills. When so much remediation is necessary in the middle grades we must question such techniques. It is too easy to blame the child when perhaps the teaching methods are at fault.

If effective public education is to survive, we must find ways of meeting the demands of children and parents, who are growing more sophisticated—and impatient with mediocrity and failure.

We at NDE cannot replace the exuberant, dedicated teacher. We can, however, provide teachers with the means for an imaginative, fun-filled approach to teaching the basics. We can equip teachers to deal sensitively with children's natural capabilities and limitations, while coming to grips realistically with the inherent difficulties of the English language. We can help teachers to produce readers in love with reading . . . children filled with wonder and delight.